

In the Midde by Laslus

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Summary:

Jonathan didn't grew in him. Jonathan wasn't there and then he was, with a baseball bat and bear traps, fighting by his side. Jonathan was a shadow on the corner of the room, and then he was shining like Nancy, lighting his insides. Jonathan was the man he hated for taking photos of his girlfriend and then he was his best friend.

It was just like that, brusque and pointy like setting a monster on fire.

Or: Steve has his Gay Panic™ All over again

In the Midde

“How long have you been here, Byers?” Said Steve, entering the dark room.

Jonathan jumped on his feet, dropping the photo he was trying to pin back on the water. “Shit.”

“Fuck, sorry, didn’t mean to scare you, dude.” Said Steve, approaching him more slowly “I just... it’s lunchtime and Nancy refuses to eat without you there, you know how she is.”

Except no, he didn’t, because that was a blatant lie for Steve to cover the fact that searching for Jonathan fucking Byers before heading to the cafeteria was second nature now.

“I’m just finishing here” he mumbled, picking the photo again

“Cool, can I see them? Nancy says you are very good.”

Jonathan looked at Steve for the first time since he entered the room, his eyes questioning him as if half-expecting him to rip his photos and break his camera again. Which was ridiculous, because *hell* if Steve was going to be that douche again – he was the one who paid for his new camera, for goodness sake.

“Yeah, sure.” He finally answered, taking a step back so Steve could burst into his personal space to look at the drying pictures.

“Those are really good, man” Steve whispered, they bodies growing close as he tried to reach for the furthers ones.

Most of them were of Will. Will eating and Will laughing and Will and his mom sleeping on the sofa. It was understandable and all kinds of adorable. Some were close ups of small things – a single Christmas light, a whole in the wall, a dark burn on the carpet that still made Steve shiver – the man had a weird way to cope, but *hey* at least it was coping.

Some, however, were Nancy’s. And Steve wasn’t surprised, he wasn’t as bright as his girlfriend, but he wasn’t blind – he *knew* Jonathan

was head over heels for her and really, he couldn't blame him. Nancy reading a book, the sun behind her. Nancy pulling her hair up in a messy ponytail. Nancy biting her lip with notebooks scared around her bed.

What surprised him is that he was there too. Sure, he was always by Nancy, so he half expected to be the side character, the blurred face behind her glory. Instead, what he found was he as just on focus as she was, framed right by her and not crooked outside the margins. He reached for the last pic, the one Jonathan had just dropped.

"No, this one isn't..." started Jonathan.

But Steve was already looking, mouth hanging a little open. It was him, just him, sitting on Nancy's couch, the light framing his full-body laugh just right. He didn't remember having it taken, but he recognized it anyways – the first time the three of them hanged out after everything, just them on the living room as the younger siblings played downstairs. The memory stroke a nerve and he was smiling before he knew it.

"It's very good"

"Thanks" he said, turning his head away "look, about this picture..."

"What, you couldn't resist my gorgeous face?" He asked with humor, glancing at the picture before pinning it back. He was the only thing on focus, the only thing in the light.

"Fuck you, Harrington" he said back, no bitterness on his voice, but he didn't face him, hiding his face as he tied his things.

Jonathan didn't grew in him. Jonathan wasn't there and then he was, with a baseball bat and bear traps, fighting by his side. Jonathan was nothing more than a kid to make fun of and then he was the kid he sat with during lunch and hanged with after school. Jonathan was a shadow on the corner of the room, and then he was shining like Nancy, lighting his insides. Jonathan was the man he hated for taking photos of his girlfriend and then he was his best friend. It was just

like that, brusque and pointy like setting a monster on fire.

Of course, in the beginning it was awkward. It still was, even after the two months they spent together. They still danced around each other reactions, as if expecting the other to roll their eyes and bite back with poison at any minute. Mostly, they were better. Jonathan didn't flinch when Steve threw his arms around his shoulders anymore and Steve was getting the hang of how to get him to laugh.

They hated each other, and then they didn't.

And where it used to be Steve-and-Nancy became Steve-Nancy-and-Jonathan. There must be something about saving each other's lives from a monster, but they just were three now. Watching movies and going to diners and studying at Nancy's bedroom. He didn't question it and *yeah*, he supposed it was weird most of the time spent with his girlfriend was alongside the guy who was also in love with her, but it felt nothing more than natural.

That was up until Jonathan dropped by his house so they could watch baseball. Nancy had family-bonding moment that night, so it was just the two of them – it was never just the two of them. Steve was nervous as he tied up his living room (he *tied up* his house. Last time he tied up anything it was his bedroom on the day Nancy came over for the pool-party), getting two beers out of the fridge and wondering If he should've already ordered the pizza.

It turned out Jonathan was as nervous as he was, hanging by his door with his eyes down, playing with his hands. Steve smiled softly automatically, because only one of them could be a nerve pile that night, greeting him with a hug and leading him to the living room with an arm around his shoulders.

Jonathan laugh was, without doubt, one of the greatest sounds for Steve– and in retrospect he should've notice sooner what was going on. He knew he fancied boys (and really, he blamed Harrison Ford) – he covered it up, of course, because he very much liked girls as well, and he half-hoped it would go away when he started dating Nancy (because he was undeniably head-over-heels for her). He knew he failed when he re-watched Star Wars with her and saw himself staring at Han Solo instead of Carrie Fisher's braless dress.

It only hit him, though, when Jonathan slept on his shoulder after the game. The warm on his side made his insides turn around and spin and he recognized the look on his own face as he stared at the man on his shoulder. It was just the same when Nancy was the one sleeping next to him, the look he gave her when she wasn't looking.

Fuck.

He got up so fast Jonathan woke up middle-fall.

"I'm sorry" he blurred out, staring at his confused face "I have to pee."

Once safe behind bathroom doors he washed his face with cold water. No. No. Liking guys from afar was one thing, jacking off to the idea of a guy trailing kisses around his body, that was bearable, but *falling in love with your male best friend was not ok*. No. Not when he had a girlfriend that was clearly too good for him and not when he finally felt like fitting somewhere. No.

He stared at his face on the mirror, took a deep breath and left the bathroom.

Jonathan had his coat and shoes on. The empty beer cans where nowhere to be seen and he wasn't facing Steve "I better go, its getting late."

"You should sleep here, I can tie the couch up" he suggested, because he could be having his gay-panic all over again, but like hell he was letting his friend go back to his home this late after knowing what kind of things lived in those woods.

He looked at Steve for the first time, face blushing and a confused glance on his eyes "No, really it's fine. I should go."

In the end he did leave (and called Steve as soon as he got home), which was good because then he can panic on his own and has a much clearer head by next morning. Kinda. Not really, but he decided to suppress and ignore it until it goes away, which is at least a solution.

Only it's the shittiest solution ever, because there were only very few

moments Jonathan weren't with them, and by the end of a week he has so many feelings he was pretty sure he was about to die. He shouldn't hang all the time with both Nancy and Jonathan, he shouldn't notice how he smiles at her and feel the sting of jealousy because of *him*.

By the end of two weeks he moves to a different, bolder strategy.

He decided to tell Nancy.

Which really *would* be the worse idea ever – worse than ignoring – if Nancy wasn't Nancy. Sure, there was the probability of her finishing the relationship after she realizes he likes men, but when she discovered a monster from a parallel dimension took her best friend away her first instinct was accepting it and finding a way around it. Besides, after the whole thing it he couldn't even think of how they could be apart. So, yeah he had everything to lose, but it was *Nancy* he was talking about. If he couldn't tell her, he couldn't tell anyone.

"Steve, are you ok?" She asked laying on his naked chest on his bed.

"Yeah, sure, why?" It was an obvious lie and he knew it. They were always very talkative after sex – it was one of the things he loved more about, how they would lay naked in bed and talk for hours, laughing stupid.

In response she raised her body to look at him with a raised eyebrow. He sighed, sitting on the bed and watching her follow his movements, chest exposed without the cover. He felt himself a little smaller as she looked at him with such care. He didn't deserve her, not when he was a mess and had half her brain and was falling for their best friend.

"I... I like men." He blurred and shit that was not what he wanted to say.

She frowned, looking at his naked body on her bed before looking at his eyes again

"Are you sure?"

"No like... Shit. I fancy girls, I'm pretty, *pretty* sure of it. And I love you, I do, it's just... sometimes I'm also... attracted to men? I don't

know if I'm making any sense." He wasn't looking at her

"No, no, I understand it" she said in a calm voice "Any guy in particular?"

He honest to god blushed, crooking his head a little "I love you."

"I know." She replied as if it was common knowledge, crooking her head in confusion. He could pin point when the missing pieces connected on her mind "Oh, you like Jonathan."

"So do you." He snapped back, glad to see he was no longer the only one flustered.

"That obvious?"

"Not as much as he is." He laughed a little, the tension on his shoulders slowly breaking "You don't mind?"

"That you like him? No. Do you mind I like him too?"

"No, I get why you do." He stared at her, a soft, found smile on his lips "We are such a weird couple." She laughed over his words, but he continued "No, I mean it, we were already weird before we fought a monster from another reality and slept with guns on the bed stand. Now we are both naked in bed talking about how we both have a crush on the same guy."

He was smiling, expecting the sound of her laughter to follow to make his heart skip a beat. Instead she had the glance on her eyes she usually saved for when she had crazy ideas, like blowing up the middle of Jonathan's hallway.

"What? Did I say too much?" he wondered how much he was going to regret saying the word *crush*.

"What if... What if we dated him?" she whispered, and his mind went blank.

"What?"

She sat on her heels, excited "Think about it! We both like him, he

probably likes both of us. We are already best friends, no one would know.”

“How would that even work?”

“How does anything work? He is already in most of our dates anyways, but instead of leaving him to the third wheel we could... ask him in.”

The image flashed on his mind, the three of them watching a movie on his sofa, Jonathan in the middle and Steve’s hand hanging over his shoulder all the way to Nancy. She would reach up and kiss Jon softly and his stomach did a backflip with just the thought, before he turned his head to kiss him himself. Suddenly the idea didn’t sound so crazy anymore.

“How are we going to do it?”

They had a plan, a very nice, well schemed plan made mostly by Nancy – and Steve was half-surprised she didn’t pull out her notebook, post-its and colorful pens to write everything down. They had a very nice plan that included a movie night over Steve’s place, a calm talk and soft questions. But just as last plan Nancy architected she failed to remember a single variable.

Steve himself.

But it wasn’t his fault, not really, they couldn’t blame him for waiting nothing more than kiss that smile. They were at Nancy’s room, of all places, with parents downstairs and a very strict rule of not-locking the room. He laughed at something stupid Steve said over his notes, and he just couldn’t. He had to do something, anything. So yeah, he might have pulled Jonathan by the shirt over Nancy’s legs and planted a kiss on his lips, but who could blame him?

He could feel Jonathan tense underneath him, every member of his body dead-cold as Steve pressed their lips together. He pulled away quickly, flashing him a smile and trying to ignore the glare Nancy was giving him.

“I... what?” Jonathan blinked once, twice, looking terrified and

confused.

The smile on Steve's face flinched. "Shit, sorry, I really shouldn't..."

"Did you just..."

"Kiss you? Yes, kind off"

He looked over Nancy for the first time, but the girl just looked resigned, sighing. "I'm sorry Jonathan, we had a *plan*."

"You had a... a what?"

Nancy looked over at Steve and *finally* said something angry – just not what Jonathan probably expected "You should've waited before you kissed him! What am I supposed to do now?"

"Improvise?" suggested Steve with an apologetic smile "It really can't get any worse."

She sighed deeply, putting her books away "Ok, but I'm doing this the *right* way." With that said, she approached his face, close enough that Steve could tell their breaths were mingling "Do you want me to kiss you?" she asked

His eyes winded turning his face to Steve, but he was just smiled at them, softly, trying to look past the confused, almost hurt look on the other man's face. Jonathan looked back at her, who was waiting with lips half parted (and the look of desire on her face was enough for Steve to want to pull her and kiss her himself).

Apparently Jonathan had the same thought, because he closed the gap hungry, kissing her like this was his last shot. Only one hand was around her (barely touching her back), the other was gripping tight the bed underneath them. Steve couldn't find on himself to look away, not when watching them kiss was very likely the most beautiful thing he had ever laid eyes on, not when everything – from the image of his girlfriend with her hands gripping the other boy's hair to the sound of the held-back moan from Jonathan – warmed both his insides and the between of his legs

"Is this a joke?" Jonathan whispered when they broke apart, and

Steve's heart broke just a little.

"No, of course not." She whispered, her hands coming to rest around his neck "We would never!"

"We just... we both, you know" started Steve, running a hand thorough his hair "we both like you."

"We want you to date us." Said Nancy "If you want to."

He blinked, his hand still only just touching her "I... How would that even work?"

"How does anything work?" Steve bite back, earning a soft snort from Nancy "We can just... figure it out as we go. What do you say?"

"Yes." His answer came before he thought about it, before either of them could look with pleading eyes, without his brain processed that *both Nancy and Steve* wanted to date him.

In response, Steve laughed relieved, pulling his hand that was still hanging on the bed for dear life and tugging his face closer "Does this mean if I kiss you now you will kiss me back?"

Jonathan just nodded, eyes stuck on Steve's lips before they kissed. Truth to his word, he kissed back, hands numbly trying to fit around his neck and hair, feeling their tongues and lips against each other. Steve had never kissed a guy before all of this. He had thought about it, fantasized even, but in the end it was very much like kissing girls. Sure, Jonathan was edges where Nancy was curves and if he paid enough attention he could feel the starts of a beard just above his upper lip, but it was just the same – and, by extension, just as amazing.

They broke apart slowly this time, hands still lingering on each other, eyes locked up until Nancy took a deep breath and let out a slightly loud moan, pulling Steve to a kiss.

Steve never got tired of kissing her. She kissed like she did everything else – she threw herself in it, dedicated to the bone to pull off the best performance. And if that meant teeth and tongues and hands pulling him closer, then *hell* is Steve was about to voice any

complains. He was still aware of Jonathan's hands on his shoulder, indecisive as if he was not sure what to do with them – and, truth to be told, neither did him, this was all very unusual.

When they broke apart, they both looked over the third party. Jonathan looked at them with lips slightly parted and a blush so obvious on his pale face Steve had to hold back a giggle. He had seen them kiss before, obviously, but the panicked look on his face told them that, this time, he had been staring (worse, he had been caught doing it, not sure where they were drawing the line).

She reached for his face, the three of them touching in the middle of her bed “I wanna try something weird.” She whispered

Steve snorted, looking around “Nancy, I'm pretty sure our definition of weird is so far from everyone else it would take you literally the will to, I don't know, burn down the school for us to be freaked. And even then I'm pretty sure we would help.”

She giggled “It's just... I'm not sure this will work, but...” She bit her lip, pulling both of their faces closer.

“Are you trying to make us *all* kiss?” asked Jonathan, voice so low it was nothing more than a breath

“Yes.” She answered with simplicity, closing the gap between them.

It was weird, Steve thought, it was too much tongue and he couldn't quite reach anyone's mouth, he wasn't even sure which hand was holding him where. Anyhow, he was pulling them closer by their waists, trying to reach a lip to bite. It was weird, yes, but by now he was so used by weird that all he could think after the first couple of seconds was how *awesome* it was that they actually managed to do that.

Nancy's mouth slipped away, leaving both men to kiss as she trailed her lips down to Jonathan's neck, biting it softly. They both smiled at the sound Jonathan failed to bite back and she turned to do the same with Steve, hard enough that it would still be marked on the next day before she returned to the kiss.

“That was...” Started Jonathan when they all broke apart.

“Freaking amazing?” finished Steve

“Yes.”

“I can’t believe it worked” laughed Nancy “How many people do you think you can fit in a kiss?”

Steve and Jonathan both laughed “Honey, baby steps, I’m sure our relationship already has enough people”

Jonathan laughed at that, the sound filling the room so that Steve had to reach over just to kiss his hair every so softly. She, on the other hand, blushed for the first time in the evening.

“I was just asking out of curiosity, I’m sure the three of us are more than enough.”

“Oh, I don’t know Steve, maybe she would prefer Henry from biology” pointed Jonathan with a soft smile, making Steve laugh, his body suddenly lighter, falling to press against his.

“I mention he was cute *once*.”

“Or twice... Maybe six times?” Jonathan pressed

“It was Steve who mocked me every time” she bit back

“Yeah, but I don’t blame you, Henry really is hot.” They both stared at him with surprise, but he just shrugged “What, is not my fault we have the same taste in men.” And with that, he poked Jonathan on the ribs.

Nancy broke down in a full body laughter “Oh my *god*, that’s so weird, we really do have the same taste in men.”

“It could be worse, at least we get to share” he joked again, pulling Jonathan for a peck

“Well, considering she likes you I *would* say her taste in men is questionable” Jonathan whispered, pulling away from the kiss with a

smirk

“Hey, you are badmouthing yourself here.”

“Someone has to be exception that proves the rule” Laughed Nancy, kissing Jonathan on the forehead

“You’re saying this, but where would either of you be without me?”

The three of them laughed and as to prove his point he pulled Nancy for a kiss, muffling their laughs against their mouths.

“Are you coming for lunch?” asked Steve, entering the dark room and closing the door behind.

Jonathan didn’t startle by his appearance, didn’t even flinch when Steve laced his hands around his waist from behind and kissed the base of his neck. Instead he hummed, crooking his head a little.

“Yes, they are almost dry.”

Steve raised his head, still hugging him as if unpreoccupied with the fact that anyone could walk in any minute. Not that there hadn’t been rumors. The way the three of them orbited around each other, touches and laughs and looks that lingered too much didn’t go unnoticed. There had been rumors and comments made loudly as they passed, meant to be heard and meant to hurt. There had been “Nancy Wheeler had two boyfriends” gratifies, followed by “Steve Harington, Fag” and whatever else they could picture.

But after everything, caring about it felt a little silly, especially when they had each others arms to lay on, so they hid it just enough it wouldn’t be confirmed and kept losing themselves on touches.

Steve’s eyes followed the pictures still hanging to dry. Will was still there for most of it, as were some artistic shots of light and shade, but there had been an increase number of pictures of them. Nancy with wet hair and that focused face she had when studying something particularly hard. Steve sweaty, a baseball bat on his hand as Nancy threw the ball at him. Steve on his kitchen, trying to cook breakfast

for Nancy's birthday.

But his eyes stopped on a special one, reaching out for it. It was taken on his room, the soft light of morning painting the picture with pastel colors. Nancy was on the edge of the bed, her naked chest half-covered as she smiled lazily, sleepy eyes barely focusing. On the middle of the bed was Steve, wrinkles for laughing on his face as he looked at the photographer. His eyes were soft, so full of emotion he could practically feel it. If that was the look he had every time he so much looked at Jonathan it was no wonder why there had been so many rumors about them.

Instead of saying anything, he turned Jonathan so he could kiss him, quick but strong. The other man smiled back at him, before finishing packing everything and leaving together to the dinner room to meet Nancy, the photo safe on his folder.

Author's Note:

Hey <3 Hope you liked it, please please dont forget to kudo and leave a comment!!

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Also English isn't my first language, so any mistakes pls let me know!